

Report To: Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: Thursday, 27 July 2023

Report Title: Overview and Scrutiny (O & S) Committee proposed Work Programme for the 2023-24 municipal year

Report By: Coral Harding, Continuous Improvement and Democratic Services Officer

Key Decision: N/A

Purpose of Report

To summarise ideas received for the 2023/24 Overview and Scrutiny work programme and to propose the next steps for progressing these.

Recommendation(s)

That the Annual Meeting reach agreement on their key lines of inquiry for the Overview and Scrutiny work programme for the 2023/24 municipal year

Reasons for Recommendations

It is the responsibility of members serving on the Overview and Scrutiny committee to set their own work programme for each municipal year at the Annual Meeting.

Introduction

1. Following Annual Council in May 2023, a new Overview and Scrutiny committee was appointed. The committee consists of eleven members (in total) and is a mixture of new and returning committee members including the Chair and Vice Chair.
2. The new committee to date has met to receive basis training and informally to discuss this year's work programme based on the committee's ideas and data from the organisation.
3. These ideas and themes draw on previous Overview and Scrutiny work. The committee have grouped work into themes to help retain the flexibility needed given the ongoing challenges the town and council continue to face.

Proposed Overview and Scrutiny work programme 2023/24

4. The committee has decided to pursue 4 themes this year; Finance, Equalities, Living Environment and Follow up 2022
5. They have identified several reviews within each theme to begin with and hope to explore other areas identified within the municipal year.
6. The work programme will use a combination of reviews and updates. They will also use the information provided at the quarterly review meetings to help with their enquires.
7. Appendix A sets out the proposed O&S work programme for the year ahead breaking down the proposed phases of each theme over the course of the year.
8. The bulk of the investigative work will be done through Quarter 2 and 3. Any recommendations from this work will be reported in Quarter 4. These recommendations will go to Cabinet or Full Council depending on relevance.

Finance Theme

9. The Overview and Scrutiny committee are concerned by the large deficit the council faces this year which is currently estimated at £2.1 million. This is a challenging position for the council that has the potential to affect all public services provided.
10. Overview and Scrutiny committee are keen to help support efforts to lessen the impact of the deficit and will continue with the quarterly financial monitoring activities.
11. The committee notes that the Finance Portfolio Holder and the Finance Officers are providing the quarterly finance reports much earlier than previous years and are thankful for this as the data is much more relevant to review.
12. They have identified some several areas of investigation and would like to review Performance Indicators (PI's) to help track the progress of financial activities.

Finance Peer Review meeting with Council Leadership

13. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee are keen to commence the year by meeting the Council Leadership to discuss the Finance Peer Review.
14. The Finance Peer Review was conducted by an external team of experienced Councillors and Officers looking at the Councils financial processes and practices. The idea of the review

is that the 'peers' provide challenge and recommend changes based on their shared learning.

15. The Leader and other Cabinet portfolio holders will be invited to a meeting to discuss the Finance Peer Reviews recommendations and proposed actions.
16. The Overview and Scrutiny committee are keen to build a strong working relationship within this financially challenging environment and are keen to help the Leader and Portfolio Holders in achieving a positive outcome.

Costs of homelessness

17. The latest financial monitoring report advised that costs homelessness are currently forecast as £5,097,669 with an overspend of £2,384,669. These costs have significant contributed to the council's financial deficit.
18. The Head of Housing has offered to brief the committee on the council's current situation. The committee welcomes this and will arrange a meeting with them soon.
19. The committee would like to receive updates on the following internal initiatives to reduce homelessness. These currently include the Housing and Homelessness task force, Hastings Housing Company and the impact of current housing strategies.
20. They would also like to gain feedback from external organisations in the borough that help the public with their housing needs and the prevention of homelessness. The committee is proposing an addition meeting in October to gather and review the feedback.
21. The committee would also like to review Performance Indicators (PI's) and amend as appropriate to help them track this issue.

Asset Management review

22. The Asset Management review will identify all asset the council current holds. The committee recognise that the council may need to dispose of assets to help with the deficit. The committee would like to review what assets the council has and the criteria of identifying the prioritisation of these for disposal. They are keen to see disposals that are best value for the organisation and are in the public interest.

Tourism and Cultural Strategy

23. This year's budget agreed changes to the previous tourism strategies to focus on a Hastings-only marketing through savings gained by ceasing contributions to the 1066 Country campaign and the funding of the Visitor Information Centre.
24. Overview and Scrutiny would like to review how this new strategy will work within the council and how this will impact the town in terms of additional tourist income and employment in this sector within town.
25. They would like to review how the new Cultural strategy will feed into the tourism strategy and how much revenue this will help create for the town.

Management and staff restructuring

26. The council has recently gone through staff restructure that has created a new Senior Leadership Team. A 2nd phase is due to be implemented through service departments. The

committee would like to review the impact of these changes and the cost benefits this has created.

27. They would also like to see how budgets will be reviewed and monitored this year between Portfolio Holders, Senior Officers and departments in these new structures. They would like to see the how budget review timelines for the year will now operate.

Equalities theme

28. The committee recognises that local residents come from many different backgrounds and have many different needs. The Equalities theme will look at how the council monitors the levels of accessibility and considerations taken in providing public services for a diverse population.

Equalities Working Group

29. The Equalities Working Group was set up last municipal year and meet several times. The meetings were open to all Councillors and were well attended.
30. The committee proposes that the Equalities Working Group continues to meet. They have an outline of work that wish to continue;
- Development of equalities charter
 - Development of equalities PI's
 - Creation of surveys for internal and external use
 - Working with community groups
 - Review council services and identify any opportunities to remove barriers

Violence Against Women and Park Safety project

31. The previous year's Overview and Scrutiny work programme included a review piece on the work conducted within Alexandra Park to improve safety following a petition from residents because of an incident.
32. The park safety work was completed successfully which included opening sight lines, additional lightning and installing CCTV. The public feedback for this was generally positive.
33. Overview and Scrutiny would like to review the impact of these park safety works later this year.

Living Environment theme

34. Overview and Scrutiny recognise the need for a healthy living environment that is safe & clean, promotes healthy behaviours and is pleasant to live in.
35. Overview and Scrutiny believe in positively promoting a healthy living environment in the borough and actively support initiatives to reduce issues that can affect this such as pollution, climate change and cleanliness.

Climate Change Action group

36. Overview and Scrutiny would like to establish a Climate Change Action Group. The group aims to support and scrutinise the council's development and implementation of projects & policies to build climate resilience within the borough.

37. Overview and Scrutiny have identified that they would like the group to look at the following;
- Reviewing the Climate Change Delivery Plan and the creation of Performance Indicators (PIs) to help monitor activities
 - Reviewing key policies and strategies including Environment Procedure Policy and the Sustainable Procurement Policy

Fly tipping

38. Overview and Scrutiny would like to look at ways of reducing fly tipping incidences through which cause cost to the council and reduce the cleanliness of resident's environments. Councillors report a high level of public interest in this area.
39. They would like to review fly tipping reporting data from My Hastings to see if a ward by ward analysis can be made to locate more problematic areas and explore solutions in place to help resolve this.

National Changes to refuse and recycling collections

40. Overview and Scrutiny are concerned about the impact of the national changes to refuse and recycling collections. They would like an update on how the council will implement these changes.
41. Overview and Scrutiny would like to find out the cost to the council to implement this, loss of income from current waste schemes and how public consultation will impact the statutory changes.
42. Southern Water in resolving the situation and preventing its reoccurrence in the future.

Follow up theme

43. Overview and Scrutiny would like to follow up and complete actions from the previous work programme and agree actions at previous meetings.

Review of Performance Indicators

44. The committee have agreed would like to review the Performance Indicators (PI's) in line with the corporate plan, delivery plan and new staff restructuring.
45. They will prioritise looking at Finance and Housing PI's as previously agreed with the Head of Strategic Planning. They would also like to review the Climate Change PI's as part of their work programme.

Sea Change

46. Overview and Scrutiny would still like to review Sea Changes activities and achievements. There have been legal reasons they have not been able to explore this directly with Sea Change.
47. The committee have chosen to explore the review East Sussex County Councils Scrutiny have undertaken and see if there are opportunities for joined up working.

Southern Water

48. Overview and Scrutiny continue to be concerned by Southern Water's performance in the borough. The committee, businesses and residents are still concerned by the sewage spillages and floods that are having a high impact.
49. Overview and Scrutiny will be inviting Southern Water to discuss the future plans for the town and the resolution to the issues being currently experienced.

Next steps

50. The Overview and Scrutiny committee will need to agree their work programme and key lines of enquiry outlined in this report.
51. The committee needs to be mindful of the time and resources available to complete this programme in full prior to the next financial year.
52. The proposed work programme will need to retain some flexibility, adapting where appropriate to the demands on time and resource encountered throughout the year.
53. The scheduled quarterly performance monitoring meetings will provide the opportunity to check in with the Lead Councillors and Senior Leadership Team on service demand and associated performance via the Council's performance Dashboard & Financial performance and position via the Financial Monitoring reports.
54. It is suggested that the review groups leads are firmed up at this meeting in order to ensure the work programme can commence soon.

Action	Key milestone	Due date (provisional)	Responsible
Overview and Scrutiny to agree their work programme	Work programme agreed	27 th July	Overview and Scrutiny committee
Overview and Scrutiny to agree review groups leads	Review groups leads agreed	27 th July	Overview and Scrutiny committee

Wards Affected

None

Policy Implications

Reading Ease Score:

Have you used relevant project tools?: N/A

Please identify if this report contains any implications for the following:

Equalities and Community Cohesiveness	Y/N
Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17)	Y/N
Risk Management	Y/N
Environmental Issues & Climate Change	Y/N
Economic/Financial Implications	Y/N
Human Rights Act	Y/N
Organisational Consequences	Y/N
Local People's Views	Y/N
Anti-Poverty	Y/N
Legal	Y/N

Additional Information

Appendix A- Proposed Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2023/24

Officer to Contact

Officer: Coral Harding
Email: Charding@hastings.gov.uk
Tel: 01424 451484